KAGORO

PLATE 9

342
415 ●
351

A KAGORO HOUSE

[face p. 90

PLATE 10

A KAGORO GIRL

142
291
415
482

KAGORO WOMEN IN THE FIELDS

[*face p.* 92

291
516

1: Meek E, G-5 (1925-1930) 1931
FF38 Katab FF38
Kagoro

Women of all sections of the Katab tribe also wear a stud or plug (about half- 301
an-inch in diameter and length) in the upper lip. This is not an uncommon feature
in Nigeria, but is not found among immediately adjacent peoples, so far as can be
determined, and so effectively sets off members of the Katab Group from their
neighbours all around.

As distinctive as the *oyam*, though surprisingly neglected by Meek in his 415
definition of the Katab culture-complex, is the massive head-board or tray on which
women of the Katab Group carry their loads: this is of unusual size, often a yard 482
long and half as wide, and ovoid (or an elongated octagon) in shape: it is carved of a
light-weight wood, flat, with a low rim, sometimes decorated with incised geometrical [531]
(rarely, stylized but realistic animal) figures, and invariably stained with red ochre.
Meek notes that among the Katab proper a mother delivers her child on her head- [386]
board which "thereafter bears a semi-sacred character." The precise distribution
of this article cannot be determined, but it does not appear to be used outside the [844]
area now occupied by the Katab Group.[7]

The dress of men of the Katab Group does not seem to be distinctive in any 291
particular detail. The traditional garb appears to have been a skin loin-covering,
and elders were distinguished by a skin across the shoulders. To-day, cloth is com-
monly used in place of skin; Hausa-Fulani caps, particularly the *fula*, and gowns, [177]
even the *riga*, may be worn by elders in civil occupations. But the priests maintain
traditional styles, and all cloth is cast off at religious observances. There is some
evidence that certain members of the Group,[8] if not all, wear the penis-sheath—an
item virtually universal among tribes immediately to the east and south, in Plateau
Province, though apparently not found in historic times westward in Nigeria.

Tribal marks of the same pattern are worn by Katab proper, Ataka, Ikulu, 304
Kagoro, Kaje, Kamantan, and Moroa: for a man, these consist of 41 vertical
scars across the forehead, nine on each cheek, and a fringe of 24 tiny cuts along the
edge of the jaw; they are similar for a woman, but number 55, 17, and 26 respec-
tively. In addition women receive intricate markings on chest, abdomen, and back.
According to Meek (1931) "boys commonly refuse to be marked" to-day; the
position as regards women is not clearly stated, but adult women attending the
Kafanchan market in 1949–50 with very few exceptions had the markings described.
There is no clear information regarding the markings used, if any, by Jaba,
Kachichere, Kagoma, and Kaninkon. Early investigators ascribe the invention of
these marks to the Katab proper.

(iv) *Social Organisation: Marriage Customs*

Katab practices do not clearly distinguish the members of the Group from 184
certain of their neighbours (especially the peoples of the Kauru hills, the Chawai,
Irigwe, Kadara, even—according to D. A. Percival—the Shuwalbe and Buli tribes
of Fulani in the area, among others); but the practices outlined below are
apparently universal among members of the Group, with the possible exception of
Kaninkon, about whom no information is available.

(*a*) *Secondary Marriage Constituting Serial Polyandry:* A virgin goes to live as 583
a wife with a man who has made customary payments and performed farm-labour
for her parents. After a period fixed by public opinion as decorous, she may leave 595
her first (primary) husband to live with another man, who has secretly won her
favour and secured by payments to her parents rights over children which she may
bear him: she is, thus, his wife in every sense, but her primary marriage has not
been dissolved, and she may, in due course, return to her primary husband. In
theory, she may add indefinitely to the number of her husbands, circulating among
them, living with each in turn for as long as she chooses (but never less than the
fixed period); in practice, however, the number is usually small, and a woman may

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[7] Wooden head-trays are used elsewhere, most notably by near neighbours of the Katab peoples on the High Plateau, but patterns differ radically from the Katab.

[8] Namely, Katab proper, according to Meek in *Northern Tribes*, though he fails to mention the subject in *Tribal Studies*, Moroa, according to Temple, and Kaje, according to Reynolds.